CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 August 1998, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 805th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Argentina, the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, Ambassador John Campbell of Australia, the Special Coordinator on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, Ambassador Palihakkara of Sri Lanka, the Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments, Mr. Pavel Grecu of Romania, the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile, the Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference, Ambassador Péter Náray of Hungary. Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I should like to remind the Conference that immediately following this plenary meeting we shall hold an informal plenary meeting to start consideration of our draft annual report, which has been circulated as document CD/WP.497.

Mr. SÁNCHEZ ARNAU (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference and convey to you our sincere satisfaction at seeing you conducting our meetings.

In a few a days time I will be leaving Geneva and I do not think it necessary that every time an Ambassador ends his duties here he draw up a balance sheet of his contributions to the Conference on Disarmament or share with his colleagues his personal views on its work. I do not think either that my own thoughts could be a contribution of interest to my colleagues, but the custom is an established one and in surroundings as conducive to the most traditional forms of international parliamentarianism as is the Conference on Disarmament there can be no question of breaking with accepted practices. I will, however, permit myself in this, my last statement to the CD, to place less emphasis on personal experience than on drawing up a balance sheet of Argentina's foreign policy with regard to disarmament and security over the almost five years that I have been with you in this Conference.

A few days after my arrival in Geneva on 18 January 1994, the Government of Argentina deposited its instrument of ratification of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and accepted its immediate entry into force despite the fact that not all the requirements of the Treaty had been met. A year later, on 10 February 1995, Argentina deposited the instrument of accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the NPT. During the Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty, which also took place in 1995, we gave our support to the indefinite extension of that instrument.

Weapons of mass destruction have never been very popular in Latin America. Brazil's recent accession to the NPT, which we welcome in this Conference after the announcement made by Ambassador Lafer, was another confirmation of this.

Last year, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of effective existence of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) that was established pursuant to the agreement on the peaceful use of

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

nuclear energy signed by Argentina and Brazil in July 1991 when both countries decided to open up their nuclear facilities for inspections by the other party. To the bilateral guarantees between our countries was added on 4 March 1994 the Quadripartite Agreement on Full-Scope Safeguards signed between the Argentine Republic, the Federal Republic of Brazil, ABACC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). From that time on, the inspections by the bilateral agency were coordinated with the inspections by IAEA. These five years of implementation of the agreement show the possibility of establishing mutual monitoring mechanisms. We think that the Argentine-Brazilian experience could be useful in other regions of the world faced with problems similar to those we once had in our own region.

Those were clear indications of our determination to put Argentina's nuclear capacity at the service of the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Today Argentina is an increasing exporter of nuclear technology and nobody could sincerely suspect or suggest that, with the safeguards and commitments that we have adopted, these resources could deviate from the peaceful purposes for which they have been transferred.

Latin America, which can be proud of its achievements in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is also making significant progress in the area of conventional weapons. In the past few years, our Governments have fostered a series of initiatives with a view to strengthening the conditions of peace and security of the region. Regional conferences on confidence- and security-building measures have been a major contribution towards the increasing of transparency, mutual understanding and security in the region. Our bilateral relations with Brazil and Chile in this area are today finding expression in exchanges of officers and in joint military manoeuvres at various border positions, such as those recently carried out with Chile in the Beagle Channel, an area that was in the past a subject of discord between our two countries. Our region's vocation for peace is also reflected in the conviction that making this part of the world into a region free from the scourge of mines is an attainable objective. This objective was adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in the resolutions on "The Western Hemisphere as an Anti-Personnel Land Mine-Free Zone" adopted on 7 June 1996, 5 June 1997 and 2 June 1998 and in the Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile that I introduced on those countries' behalf in the CD itself at the meeting of 30 July last.

Argentina has been participating actively in mine-clearing activities sponsored by the peace operations of the United Nations and by the OAS. We have also furnished this type of assistance through the White Helmets in Angola and we have offered to undertake the demining of the Malvinas Islands. This experience has shored up our conviction that the proliferation and use of those weapons, which have especially cruel consequences, particularly for defenceless populations, warrant priority multilateral consideration and resolute unilateral action. Therefore, in March 1995, the Argentine Government decided to suspend the export, sale or transfers of all anti-personnel landmines without exception for a period of five years from that date. On 2 October of the same year, it ratified the Convention on Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and it participated as a full member in the Review Conference that adopted revised Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines. Argentina also participated actively in the process for negotiating the Ottawa Convention and, on 4 December 1997, signed that international instrument. The magnitude of the problem caused by anti-personnel landmines calls for coordinated and continued effort on the part of the international community as a whole. We therefore support its being dealt with at this Conference as a contribution and complement to the objectives embodied in the Ottawa Convention.

In another sphere of non-proliferation, on 2 October 1995 my Government, after having been one of the first signatories of that instrument, ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. As part of the implementation of the commitments entered into in that Convention, on 11 September 1997 the relevant national authority was established.

Similarly, in the context of the Biological Weapons Convention, Argentina participated in the Review Conference and is participating in the Ad Hoc Group negotiations of that Convention and remains fully committed to intensifying joint efforts in order to conclude successfully and as soon as possible the negotiation of a verification protocol in order to strengthen the efficiency and improve the implementation of this Convention.

Because of the measures pursued with our neighbours and at the regional level and because of the development in our concept of security, we were able, on 5 January 1995, to ratify the Law on Voluntary Military Service which replaces the former, entirely mandatory system of conscription. We thereby took a qualitative, decisive step forward in a process of transformation that has definitively sealed the subordination of the Argentine armed forces to civilian authority, an essential basis for the democratic consolidation that was held back for decades in my country. That transformation, founded in the growing technicity and restructuring of our armed forces, has been an encouragement for the strong Argentine presence in United Nations peacekeeping operations in recent years, making our country the biggest participant in this type of operation of any Latin American country. The United States designation of Argentina as a major non-NATO ally is further concrete evidence of this transformation and of how my country's foreign policy with regard to security and non-proliferation is seen as stable and reliable.

I could not conclude without referring to three important features of the years during which we have worked together in this Conference.

The first, which coincided with my arrival in Geneva, was the intense final stages of the negotiation of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which is undoubtedly this Conference's greatest achievement of recent years. We made the greatest efforts to involve our country fully in those negotiations, contributing the cooperation of our experts and offering the use of all facilities asked for in order to make the verification more efficient. Moreover, Argentina was one of the co-sponsors of the resolution by which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Treaty and signed the Treaty on

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

24 September 1996. We are now awaiting signature and ratification of the Treaty by all the States that have been mentioned in annex 2 to the Treaty and its consequent early entry into force.

Next there was the period of arduous negotiation with regard to the adoption of Ambassador Shannon's report and of the mandate for the negotiation of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Three years later, after an intensive and unnecessary process, we have established the Ad Hoc Committee and appointed its Chairman. Therefore the Conference on Disarmament will at last be able to resume negotiations on this convention. We would like to express the Argentine Government's deep satisfaction at the decision that has been taken and at the fact that the Committee will be chaired by Ambassador Moher of Canada. However, I must also express our regret that these decisions have only been taken at this year's session. The successive elections of the chairmen of the ad hoc committees are one of the outstanding issues for this Conference. We trust that Ambassador Illanes' experience and innovative ideas in this regard will enable the Conference on Disarmament to be more efficient in the future.

Finally, allow me to mention another topic of common interest for this Conference that has not been completed as yet, the increase in the number of its members. Our position has always been one of working for that expansion in order to give the Conference on Disarmament the representativity it needs. This was the spirit which prompted us to become fully involved in the negotiations and to present the draft decision that enabled the admission of 23 new members. I should like to take this opportunity expressly to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, for the cooperation we received in this respect.

I should also like to refer briefly to the group system under which this Conference operates. These groupings are formed on the basis of sometimes very general criteria and affinities. Within each of them there can be seen different nuances of position that, being dictated by respective national interests as well as by differing political perceptions, sometimes make it hard to discern any lowest common denominator other than the generalized desire to find solutions through dialogue and negotiation. In our case, this led shortly after my arrival in Geneva to our repositioning ourselves within the spectrum of the Conference in an effort to become part of a group expressing in more appropriate form the essentials of our policy on disarmament and security - not, however, that we ceased to share many of the concerns of members of other groups. For that reason, we have over the years viewed with sympathy the formation of informal groups sharing specific objectives that have spurred our Conference's search for the consensus that are sometimes so elusive.

If there is one thing that motivates the foreign policy of the Republic of Argentina, it is the country's firm commitment to peace, security and disarmament and its pacifist vocation. That is the mission that we have tried to fulfil during this long period of the life of the CD that we have shared

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

with you. Since my country returned to the way of democracy, it has pursued that policy in a context of dialogue and understanding for the interests and problems of all who share those objectives and has always fostered the solution of disputes through law. We have shown in this regard perhaps unparalleled patience in the face of the absence of a solution to the sole colonial conflict that we have yet to resolve.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. Ambassador, with your customary modesty you refrained from drawing up a balance sheet of your own contribution to the work of the Conference. All I would observe is that you have represented your country in the Conference for more than four years, during which you presented and defended the positions of your Government on the issues under discussion at the Conference with authority and diplomatic talent which we have all recognized. I have certainly enjoyed working with you, Sir, and I am sure that I speak for all of us when I express to you and your family our very best wishes for continued success and personal happiness.

I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador John Campbell, who will be speaking in his capacity as Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): I take the floor to present a final report on my consultations in pursuit of my mandate as the Conference on Disarmament's Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines.

Delegations will recall that when I last reported to this Conference I had proposed a draft mandate and an accompanying statement of understanding, and advised the Conference that I would continue consultations on these texts with a view to seeing if a consensus could be arrived at which would enable the Conference to take a decision on them. Since that time I have again consulted widely with members of the Conference, culminating in a request I made of the President on Monday, 17 August, to ascertain the views of regional groups on the draft mandate and accompanying statement of understanding. The President advised me on Wednesday, 19 August, that as a result of his consultations with regional group coordinators, three of the regional groups (China, the Eastern Group and the Western Group) had reached a consensus in support of my proposed draft mandate and statement of understanding. The President advised that one group, the Group of 21, still required further time to consider my proposals and that, accordingly, it was not yet in a position to advise the President that a consensus existed within that group in support of the draft mandate and statement of understanding.

I believe that for this year I have taken the anti-personnel landmines file as far as I think I can take it. I am naturally disappointed that I have been unable to put forward a proposal which would enjoy the full support of all members of this Conference. I have concluded at this stage that it is less a matter of crafting the right language and more a question of winning the necessary political will to take a decision which would see this Conference negotiate a transfer ban on anti-personnel landmines.

(Mr. Campbell, Australia)

But I think we are nearly there. I take heart from the fact that at least three groups are in support of my proposals, that the proposals now have been presented to the Conference through the medium of my first report, and that within the Group where discussions are continuing, I have been advised of a large measure of support. I remain confident that with some further work in the year ahead, we shall be able to reach a resolution of the issue and undertake the work which I believe the majority of members wish the Conference to undertake. Accordingly, I believe that this Conference should reappoint a Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines next year to conclude the work carried forward this year by achieving the consensus necessary for the Conference to take an early decision to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a transfer ban on anti-personnel landmines.

As a result of my consultations I am convinced that there is a continued interest within the Conference in seeing the work on anti-personnel landmines undertaken in an open and honest attempt to address the global anti-personnel landmines problem at its source. While several of the major producers and users of anti-personnel landmines, including a number who are members of this Conference, are not prepared, at this stage at least, to sign and ratify existing legal instruments dealing with anti-personnel landmines, including the Ottawa Treaty, their national positions on anti-personnel landmines issues have become more flexible and more cooperative as a result of growing international momentum in favour of addressing the enormous political, economic and social cost of the indiscriminate use of such weapons. It is my judgement that agreement should be possible within this body to negotiate a ban on the transfer of anti-personnel landmines and I consider that such an agreement, if adopted by the major traditional producers and traders of anti-personnel landmines, not yet parties to the Ottawa Treaty, would present a major and important step forward.

I perceive it is the view of the majority of this Conference that any activity, any work in this Conference on anti-personnel landmines which could contribute to reducing the human tragedy anti-personnel landmines cause, any work that will contribute to reducing the enormous social, economic and political costs to the international community, would be a thoroughly worthwhile and justified objective. My consultations lead me to believe that a ban on the exports of anti-personnel landmines which included major traditional producers and users of anti-personnel landmines would add considerably to a global solution to the anti-personnel landmines problem. It would bring Ottawa Convention non-signatories some way towards the norm established by that Convention rather than run the risk of their being permanently alienated from it.

It has been drawn to my attention that a good proportion of the anti-personnel landmines currently in the ground, those being laid now and those which, notwithstanding existing legal instruments, will be laid in the future are the results of the actions of non-State entities. It is important, therefore, that the international community attack both the supply and the demand sides of this conundrum - where it is not possible to persuade political groups to forsake the use of anti-personnel landmines, the international community through this Conference can take measures to diminish

(Mr. Campbell, Australia)

the international supply of these weapons. This is what a transfer ban would do. While many of the traditional producer States have in place various kinds of unilateral moratoria on the export of anti-personnel landmines, it is argued that a transfer ban would serve to standardize the scope of these moratoria, many of which apply only to certain types of anti-personnel landmines and are time-limited, and give them a secure and lasting basis in international law.

Lastly, may I thank members of the Conference for their cooperation in this endeavour, for the time that they have made available to me to discuss the issues and for the advice they have given me. I am also grateful for the valuable support and assistance I have received from the secretariat.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Palihakkara, who will speak in his capacity as Special Coordinator on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mr. PALIHAKKARA (Sri Lanka): It is my great pleasure, Mr. President, to extend to you, the representative of the United Kingdom, our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I do so with particular pleasure in the context of the traditionally warm and friendly relations that the UK and Sri Lanka enjoy. You have already demonstrated your skills in organizing a vigorous Conference management programme and we have confidence that you will successfully guide our work during the difficult period of report preparation.

I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude and, indeed, admiration to my friend and colleague, Ambassador Maimeskul, who very ably steered our work last month, culminating in some significant decisions. Mr. President, I would also like to share your sentiments of appreciation of Ambassador Sánchez Arnau's contribution, not only in the CD but also in other multilateral forums in Geneva. We will certainly miss his contributions, and would like to wish him and his family well.

I take the floor today in my capacity as the Special Coordinator on agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". I have already presented to the Conference on 11 June 1998 interim findings of my consultations. Since then I have had further consultations, both bilateral and multilateral, including a second open-ended consultation on 14 August 1998.

There continues to be the general recognition that item 3 of the CD's agenda is one of importance and urgency and delegations showed readiness to contribute towards that common objective in a constructive spirit. Consultations also revealed that there is no objection, in principle, to the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee under this agenda item, while it was evident that further consultations would be needed as to when that decision can be taken. There was a very broad mainstream view in the Conference that

(Mr. Palihakkara, Sri Lanka)

further work under item 3 can be usefully resumed within the framework of an ad hoc committee. In this regard, several constructive ideas were considered during open-ended and other consultations concerning updating of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee contained in the decision of the CD dated 13 February 1992 and as also referred to in General Assembly resolution 52/37.

Based on my consultations and the widely shared view that an ad hoc committee should be resumed under this agenda item, a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee was considered at the open-ended consultations held on 14 August 1998. The text of the draft mandate reads as follows:

> "In the exercise of its responsibilities as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum in accordance with paragraph 120 of the final document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament decides to re-establish an ad hoc committee under item 3 of its agenda.
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> The Conference requests the Ad Hoc Committee, in discharging that responsibility, to continue to examine and to identify, through substantive and general consideration, issues relevant to item 3 of the agenda with a view to, inter alia, agreeing on a mandate for an ad hoc committee to negotiate specific measures towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space.
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> The Ad Hoc Committee, in carrying out this work, will take into account all existing agreements, existing proposals and future initiatives as well as developments which have taken place since the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee, in 1985, and report on the progress of its work to the Conference on Disarmament before the end of its 1998 session."

There was a wide measure of support for the draft text and the approach contained therein, although a complete consensus thereon would require further consultations. It is, therefore, recommended that this text be used as a basis for further consultations with a view to taking a decision on the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee under this agenda item in due course. It is also recommended that the Conference take a decision to continue consultations for this purpose in 1999.

Before I conclude I would like to thank all delegations and regional groups and their Coordinators for the cooperation and understanding extended to me in my consultations. I must also extend my thanks to the Secretary-General of the Conference and his staff for the valuable assistance they gave me.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Mr. Pavel Grecu, who will speak in his capacity as Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments.

Mr. GRECU (Romania): Mr. President, let me begin by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I salute a distinguished representative of the United Kingdom, a country with which Romania enjoys a long tradition of friendly relations and seeks an ever-closer cooperation in many fields, including security, arms control and disarmament. Please rest assured of the Romanian delegation's full cooperation, both in our national capacity and as the current Coordinator of the Eastern European Group, in discharging your important duties, as you steer the Conference on its way towards the end of the session and preparation of the annual report.

I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Maimeskul of Ukraine, for the excellent job he has done, and welcome our recently arrived colleague, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria. At the same time, I take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation for Argentina's contribution to the work of the CD, as well as our best wishes for success and good health to Ambassador Sánchez Arnau in his future endeavours.

I have asked for the floor today in order to present my Report as Special Coordinator under agenda item 7, entitled "Transparency in armaments" (TIA). I was appointed to this post in accordance with the decision adopted by the Conference on 26 March 1998, and mandated to seek the views of its members on the most appropriate way to deal with the questions related to item 7. The report naturally, contains my personal views and does not, in any way, bind the delegations.

I should start by saying that the intensive, yet absorbing and thought-provoking consultations I held during those months revealed a great interest among practically all delegations in the matter of transparency in armaments. My report refers to three main aspects, namely: the merits of transparency in armaments, the scope of activity on TIA, and, finally, possible ways of dealing with TIA within the Conference on Disarmament.

Firstly, the merits of transparency in armaments. Many interlocutors emphasized that transparency is simultaneously a very important concept and instrument in what we could call "the art of peace". It was underlined that objective information on military policies, armaments and armed forces has contributed significantly in reducing misunderstanding or miscalculation of each other's intentions. Confidence-building was a critical precondition to solving political problems and to taking the road to ending the cold war. It also paved the way to the conclusion of concrete disarmament agreements, such as the reduction by half of major weapons categories in Europe.

Transparency appears, therefore, an important ingredient in building confidence. Without confidence it would not be possible to arrive at security for all in a sustained manner. Transparency is not an end in itself, nor can it be a substitute for removing the root causes of tension, nor for concrete and verifiable balanced and non-discriminatory arms control agreements. Keeping secret basic information on the quantity and nature of armaments and military activity raises the level of suspicion between States and can provoke an arms race, thus further increasing tension. On the other hand,

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

transparency does not mean disclosing all military information in detail and without any restrictions. In contrast, transparency means laying open national military policies in general, levels of quantities and, to some extent, also the quality of critical armaments as well as armed forces activities.

As a confidence-building measure, transparency contributes to reducing the possibility of surprise attack on one State by another, putting stress on weapons that could be used for offensive operations. It primarily aims at decreasing political and military tensions in many regions of the world and assuaging concerns about the build-up of conventional weapons beyond the level required for self-defence, which are posing a threat to international peace and security. In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is seen as quite an important tool involving transparency and confidence which has the potential of contributing to the easing of tensions and of restraint in arms transfers.

Secondly, the scope of activity on TIA. The consultations on the most appropriate subjects to be dealt with by the Conference under item 7 of its agenda revealed a wealth of ideas. It was suggested that the proposals made in the period 1993-1994, and later in the Expert Group on the United Nations Register in 1997, should be revisited and discussed in depth in an ad hoc committee of the CD. Equally, hope was expressed that the work on transparency in the CD would also help in developing methods of utilizing transparency as a tool to combat the illicit transfers of arms, in particular small arms, or solving the problem of supplies of weapons which are of a destabilizing nature. According to one delegation, in discussing transparency, it should also be borne in mind the direct connection which exists between arms transfers and terrorism. There are other avenues that could be explored, such as a code of conduct on arms transfers or a global exchange of objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures, as well as transfers of high technology with military application.

Three issues emerged as being of particular interest and sensitivity, which, therefore, need further consideration: the work of the Conference on Disarmament related to the United Nations Register for Conventional Arms; the transparency in the field of weapons of mass destruction; and the relation between regional and global in terms of TIA. On all those substantive issues, further consultations are needed in order to reach a common ground.

Issue number one: while several delegations expressed concern about duplication of work, others underlined that there are a lot of strands that the Group of Experts on the United Nations Register did not address and which the CD could take up. There is no reason we could not look at the Register here in Geneva and make sensible recommendations on how to improve this instrument of transparency; particularly on how to build agreement among us all for the addition of military holdings and procurement through national production. That would be a huge help to this particular instrument. Thus, in the opinion of those delegations, it appears appropriate to proceed to notifications that would have great value and great importance as a

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

confidence-building measure on additional data on military holdings and the production of armaments. The CD could address the possible format for a declaration of such holdings.

Issue number two: several delegations consider transparency as an important factor in the establishment of trust, and for trust to be total, transparency likewise must be total, encompassing not merely conventional weapons or certain categories of conventional weapons but all weapons, including, therefore, nuclear weapons and high technology arms. Transparency, as understood heretofore, should no longer be based exclusively on resolution 46/36 L. Those delegations expressed regrets that efforts to expand the framework of the Register for Conventional Arms have been to no avail. The Register is confined to the annual declarations of the transfer of seven categories of armaments, disregarding nuclear armaments, weapons of mass destruction and high technology for military use and purposes. According to the same delegations, nuclear-weapon States should have a similar register so that there is equal transparency for all. If that was not the case, it was felt that it would be an exercise in discrimination. The promoters of this view could support an agreement on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on TIA with a negotiating mandate covering weapons of mass destruction and, particularly, nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, concerns were voiced that by establishing a direct link between proposals for transparency in weapons of mass destruction and transparency in conventional weapons, the very valuable work that is being done on conventional weapons could be endangered and the existing instruments dealing with weapons of mass destruction be devaluated.

Delegations also indicated that there were certain pitfalls in the area of transparency in weapons of mass destruction. Both biological and chemical weapons are banned by separate Conventions. With regard to nuclear weapons, there is fear that a transparency exercise or transparency proposals in this field could become a method of recognition of further nuclear-weapon States than the more-than-enough nuclear-weapon States we are already faced with. Some delegations pointed out that the transfer of nuclear weapons is banned by the NPT, so it makes no sense talking about transfer in this case since that is the matter the United Nations Register is confined to. The question is about holdings of nuclear weapons. Another delegation further expressed doubts that a register of nuclear holdings would increase confidence in the world. Such a register raises inevitable questions: would the submissions to it be voluntary? If they are voluntary, would there be instances when nuclear-weapon States might find it useful to overestimate the number of weapons they have, in order not to threaten by use of weapons, but by numbers that they reported? Is it conceivable to verify the holdings of nuclear weapons?

However, it was suggested that the problem of nuclear weapons might need measures of a different type than only the legally-binding instruments we develop with respect to weapons of mass destruction. One delegation suggested that nuclear weapons should be dealt with more appropriately in the field of

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

nuclear disarmament, since we are not merely pursuing the transparency of nuclear weapons but are on the way to nuclear weapons reduction, towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Issue number three: a view was expressed in the sense that it is impossible for any country to agree and to realize absolute transparency of its arms or matters related to arms. Any request to establish a universally acceptable, abstract or similarly uniform transparency regime was not viable, since there is great difference in the political, military and security environments among countries. There was even a great difference in cultural values. Therefore, the same degree of transparency would have a different impact on different countries. It was necessary to take into account the requirements of specific arms control and disarmament treaties, as well as the specific regional circumstances, to explore and formulate well-focused and viable transparency measures. For various reasons, transparency measures applicable to one region would not necessarily apply to other regions.

Others asserted the importance of transparency being established at the regional or subregional level, and also at the global level. Not everything can be done at the global level, but here we could agree on a "menu" consisting of a number of measures that could be selected and which could work at the regional or subregional level. With respect to transparency measures related to confidence-building in regions of tension, it could be useful to look into the field of transparency in military activities, such as field exercises, large-force movements and deployment of military forces, including those with far-reaching strike capabilities.

One delegation pointed out that providing information about defence policy, defence expenditure, military equipment, etc. by publishing defence white papers is contributing to enhancing global transparency and can be discussed in the CD.

Thirdly, possible ways of dealing with TIA. There is a largely shared view among delegations about the establishment of an ad hoc committee on TIA. This body should be given a simple mandate of a deliberative nature so that in the period to come, after the establishment of the committee, we could go into these proposals and see which ones we can usefully elaborate and negotiate towards measures at the global level. It was argued that very often, before entering into any negotiation, there is a need for discussion, examination and reflection on what could be done. This is seen as a step-by-step process and a logical way to proceed. It was emphasized that there is nothing in the Rules of Procedure of the CD that stands against establishing such a committee.

Other delegations expressed a more focused approach, indicating their support for the idea of the establishment of an ad hoc committee on TIA with the mandate agreed upon at the beginning of the 1990s. This mandate has not yet been exhausted or tapped. In the opinion of those delegations there could be a need to streamline the mandate, making it more simple.

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

A different school of thought believes that, if an ad hoc committee is set up, it should be able to negotiate. It needs to negotiate a protocol, a treaty, or simply engage in negotiations. When there is thinking and reflection to be done, that needs to be done in advance, within a mechanism for consultations. As things stand at present, the best means of approaching the matter is, in the opinion of those delegations, to start by establishing a common vision and common objectives so that we can conclude whether or not we can envisage some organizational arrangements and negotiating mechanism. The followers of this line of thinking stated their view that the appointment of a Special Coordinator offers precisely the most suitable framework and mechanism for consultations at present.

The genuine interest in TIA expressed by many member States is only matched by the desire that the CD continue to pay attention and, indeed, intensify its work on this matter. In the guise of a conclusion, I would venture to say that our common endeavours related to TIA have brought us closer to consensus. This is why, although my task is ending here, I should call this rather lengthy statement yet another progress report, in an attempt to illustrate the need for continuation next year of the work resumed at this session by reappointing a Special Coordinator. I hope that the documentation on TIA, prepared and circulated by the secretariat at my request will contribute to encouraging an evolution in that sense.

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to all delegations for their cooperation and ideas put forward, as well as my sincere thanks to our able secretariat, in particular Mr. Zaleski, for their priceless assistance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Javier Illanes, who will speak in his capacity as Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, since this is the first time for me to take the floor during your presidency, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of this high office and, at the same time, to offer you all my cooperation as well as that of my delegation in the fulfilment of your great responsibilities. I also wish to express the Chilean delegation's thanks to your predecessor in the presidency, Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul of Ukraine, for his fruitful and efficient conduct of the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time I take advantage of this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, with whom I look forward to having close cooperation in the future. I also wish to associate myself with your words of farewell to the Ambassador of Argentina, whose contribution to the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament has been long and valuable. I wish him every happiness and success in his future activities.

At its meeting on 26 March 1998, the Conference on Disarmament decided to appoint, inter alios, a Special Coordinator for the improved and effective

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

functioning of the Conference with the mandate defined in decision CD/1501, paragraph 8. On 14 May 1998 I was appointed to serve in this function.

In fulfilling this mandate I have taken specially into account the results of t'e consultations conducted last year by the Ambassador of Egypt as Special Coordinator on this subject. Ambassador Zahran had reported to the Conference that the informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the CD were, and I quote, "useful, constructive and reflected the shared desire to continue in the future the consultations". Ambassador Zahran made a distinction in his report between issues on which "a better understanding seems to be detected" (12 items), and issues on which "further consultations are needed" (4 items). Hence, he recommended "that the Conference on Disarmament continue consultations to re-examine the efficiency of its work in its next session".

Given the short time available before the end of the 1998 session, I decided to give priority to the consultations on certain new ideas and proposals aimed at improving the functioning of the Conference which had emerged during the current session. These were not intended to deal with substantive aspects of the work of the CD but rather to find how to improve and simplify its rules and procedures so as to facilitate its operation and avoid situations of paralysis like the one which prevailed in 1997. It was apparent that many delegations consider the Conference spends too much time on points of procedure and that there is a need to improve and modernize its methods of work so that discussions on such matters are shorter and no artificial links are created and the Conference can concentrate on substantive issues.

Four main topics were addressed in the questions and proposals that I had circulated in a letter and questionnaire that I sent for their opinions to the delegations of member and observer States.

I received numerous replies indicating a substantial degree of support for some of those proposals and ideas and for the need to improve the CD's procedures. Some delegations expressed certain misgivings, and a few even expressed a negative opinion concerning the advisability of adopting one or more of them. I held three successive meetings for open-ended informal discussions during which additional points of view were received from delegations, clarifications were offered and an interesting debate took place.

I proposed new texts for possible draft decisions in which suggestions and clarifications were included. Nonetheless, there remain differences and doubts that prevent a consensus being reached at the present stage, and the lack of time, too, prevents continued exploration of these and other ideas that might be of use for the more modern and effective functioning of the Conference. More generally, it should be said that broad convergence was apparent between delegations concerning the value of informal presidential consultations as a means of moving the Conference's work forward and concerning the need for such consultations to be transparent and universal.

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

The lack of time also prevented continued examination of the topics considered in Ambassador Zahran's consultations in 1997.

In view of the foregoing, I recommend to the Conference that it decide to pursue the study of its improved and effective functioning at the next session.

In conclusion, permit me to express my sincere gratitude to all the delegations of members and observers for their constructive participation and cooperation regarding my mandate. I am also very grateful to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Mr. Zaleski and other members of the secretariat and the interpreters for their efficient support.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Péter Náray, who will speak in his capacity as Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in carrying out this responsible task, and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. It is also my pleasant duty to express our satisfaction at the skilful and highly effective manner in which your predecessor, Ambassador Maimeskul of Ukraine, steered our proceedings. He deserves credit for the milestone decision on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Hungary is on record for her long-standing advocacy of the commencement of these negotiations and, therefore, most warmly welcomes this development.

I also take this opportunity to welcome our new colleague, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria. I also would like to join my colleagues who expressed their good wishes to Ambassador Sánchez Arnau, who is leaving Geneva soon.

I have asked for the floor to present a report to the Conference on Disarmament on the consultations I have undertaken as Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the CD for re-appointing me as Special Coordinator on this very sensitive, comprehensive and challenging subject. Let me stress at the beginning that any observations or conclusions this report may contain are my own and are not binding on delegations.

Following the adoption of Decision CD/1501 on the programme of work on 26 March, I conducted bilateral consultations with a number of delegations representing all constituencies. In addition to the meetings with the three groups and the delegation of China, I held two rounds of informal open-ended

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

consultations on 22 June and 18 August when members and observers had the opportunity to reflect on my preliminary findings. National positions have also found their reflection in the statements to plenary meetings, which I have taken into account.

Before going into detail regarding the results of my consultations this year, I wish to make some general observations which reflect certain important changes in positions of delegations compared to my findings of last year. My first general observation is that, in the light of several new developments since the end of the last session which are closely related to the work of the CD and the changing security environment associated with them, delegations have started to reconsider their positions on major issues of disarmament. As a result, I have witnessed more flexibility and an increased desire for action on the part of a number of delegations without experiencing a major shift in basic positions on substantive matters or an emerging consensus on how to redefine the disarmament agenda established during the years of the cold war. My second observation is that the practical inactivity of the CD in the last two years, and some important developments in the field of disarmament which took place outside the CD, sent a clear message: if Governments do not wish to lose advantages which are associated with this highly appreciated professional disarmament forum, practical arrangements should be made regarding the CD's agenda and its programme of work.

My consultations have covered two aspects of the review of the agenda. The first level of discussions concerned the role and future of the agenda, as well as the priority items on it. In this resect, divergent views were registered which basically remained unchanged from the previous session and which I described in my report last year (CD/PV.776). On the one hand, many delegations repeatedly conveyed to me the view that the agenda is based on the priorities established in the Final Document of SSOD-I, and the Decalogue, and explained that the present agenda, by and large, retained its relevance to the new realities of our times. These delegations pointed out again that for them the absolute priority was to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament. On the other hand, there was another approach advocating radical changes in the agenda and the adoption of what essentially would be a generic agenda with two or three broad items, namely, "nuclear disarmament", "conventional disarmament" and "other items", which, in their views, would better reflect the requirements of our epoch. Delegations belonging to this school of thought confirmed their support for document CD/1434 containing detailed proposals in this regard.

Since basic positions on the agenda, despite the increased flexibility of many delegations belonging to different groups, were not sufficiently close to embark on an exercise to combine the two approaches, I am not in a position to attempt proposing a new future agenda for the CD. Rather, I suggest concentrating on possible amendments, additions, and updates within the framework of the present agenda. The role of the agenda, as a practical tool to guide and structure the work of the Conference, was somewhat reinforced by the decision to initiate consultations of the presidential Troika regarding item 1 and the establishment of an ad hoc committee on this item entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" which "shall

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

negotiate ... a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

At the same time, consultations revealed widely-held positions questioning the relevance of certain items on the agenda, among them that of item 2 ("Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters"), though its deletion was proposed by fewer delegations than last year.

The increased importance delegations attached to certain items on the agenda was confirmed by the appointment of a Special Coordinator under item 3 ("Prevention of an arms race in outer space"), as well as by the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee under item 4 ("Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons").

During my consultations the most frequently proposed item for deletion was item 5 ("New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: radiological weapons"). On the other hand, at least one delegation expressed the view that this item should be kept as it was. This delegation stressed the importance of addressing the issue of such weapons while they are at the stages of research and development, and suggested that enhanced information-gathering and study by the secretariat and UNIDIR would be helpful to this effect.

The appointment of Special Coordinators on items 6 ("Comprehensive programme of disarmament") and 7 ("Transparency in armaments") to seek the views of the CD members on the most appropriate way to deal with questions related to these items also indicated their relevance to the programme of work.

Positions of delegations regarding agenda items 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 are reflected in the respective reports of the Ad Hoc Committees, the Troika and Special Coordinators.

Divergent views were expressed concerning the various proposals to add new items to the existing agenda. Based on the consultations, I wish to refer to two of them which were the subject of in-depth considerations. At least one delegation made the point that the regional aspects of arms control and disarmament should become an important facet of the work of the CD, and the Conference should provide an umbrella for different bodies to address the specific threats to peace and security which arise in certain regions. At the same time several delegations expressed doubts about widening the CD's activity this way saying that regional issues are outside the scope of the mandate of the CD and can be more effectively dealt with in other forums. There were delegations which stressed the increasing danger posed by regional conflicts for international peace and security. Therefore, they did not rule out the possibility of the CD, as a forum negotiating disarmament treaties, examining its role in this field in the future.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

A large number of delegations suggested the inclusion of a new item called "Conventional weapons", or at least indicated their lack of opposition to do so if there was a consensus. The point was made by many delegations that this item is part of the Decalogue. The view was also expressed that this subject was already covered by items 6 and 7. There is a general trend in favour of coming back to this proposal in the future and exploring the possibilities of reflecting on it in the context of a reformed agenda.

That concludes the brief outline of my consultations. Though the Special Coordinator is not in a position to make specific recommendations on the substance of the review of the agenda, I have the impression that delegations are interested and willing to take up this issue in 1999. Therefore, I recommend to the Conference to continue the consultations on the review of the agenda during the next annual session by appointing a Special Coordinator on this issue at the start of the 1999 session.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all delegations for their contribution to our discussions and for the constructive and cooperative spirit prevailing in our joint exercise. I also extend my gratitude to the secretariat, to Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, and Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, for their support and assistance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report and for the kind words which he addressed to the Chair.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): I should like to congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is happy to see you in the Chair. Please be assured of my delegation's full support as you guide this Conference to a successful conclusion of this year's session. I should also like to thank Ambassador Maimeskul of Ukraine for the skilful and highly successful conduct of his presidency, which resulted in an historic decision by this Conference. Let me also welcome our new colleague, Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria. I am looking forward to working with him. At the same time, I should like to thank Ambassador Arnau for his valuable contribution to this Conference and wish him and his family well for the future.

I am taking the floor today to inform the Conference that on 20 August 1998 Germany deposited its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. On this occasion, Federal Minister Kinkel underlined the key role of this Treaty for the international efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Federal Government will continue to work towards an early entry into force of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal that nuclear tests will once and for all be a matter of the past.

Since I have the floor, I should like to say that my delegation has listened with great interest to the reports of the Special Coordinators and would like to thank them most formally for their outstanding work. The

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

reports demonstrate that in several areas considerable progress has been made to secure this progress and to promote further progress in the future. It is important that the work on these issues should continue.

The PRESIDENT: I am grateful to the representative of Germany and for the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I am almost certain that that is not the case.

The secretariat has circulated, at my request, a tentative timetable of meetings for the period 31 August to 4 September 1998. The timetable was, as is traditional, prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances and the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda, entitled "Cessation of the arms race and nuclear disarmament". It is merely indicative and subject to change, if necessary. On this understanding, may I assume that the timetable is acceptable?

It was so decided.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 3 September 1998, at 10 a.m. But before adjourning this meeting, I should like to remind you that we will hold an informal plenary meeting in 10 minutes' time, at a quarter to 12, to start the consideration of the draft annual report as contained in document CD/WP.497.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.806
3 September 1998

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 3 September 1998, at 10.25 a.m.

President: Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom)

GE.98-63466 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 806th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Dear colleagues, we open our proceedings today on a sombre note. I am sure that you will have listened with dismay to the reports of the tragic accident involving Swissair Flight 111. This flight number, of course, is familiar to many of us and the fact that its destination was our host city of Geneva means that this tragedy strikes close to home. I should like to express our sympathy to Ambassador Hofer, and through him to the Swiss authorities and people on this tragic event. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to all the victims and bereaved of whatever nationality they may be.

Mr. HOFER (Switzerland) (translated from French): On behalf of the Swiss delegation and my Government and of the victims' families and friends, I should like to thank you for the many proofs of sympathy that you and the Conference have shown in connection with this terrible disaster. You can be assured that the Conference's messages will be passed on to the people concerned, to our authorities and to all the families stricken by this catastrophe.

The PRESIDENT: I have on my list of speakers for today the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons, and the representative of Israel. As I informed you at the informal plenary meeting held yesterday, I intend also to report to you on the consultations the presidency has held pursuant to paragraph 1 of decision CD/1501, which requires the President to "pursue intensive consultations and seek the views of its Members on appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with agenda item 1 entitled 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament', taking into consideration all proposals and views on this item".

I should now like to give the floor to Ambassador Mark Moher of Canada, who will introduce the report of the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", as contained in document CD/1555.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): As you have already done, I draw the attention of the plenary to document CD/1555 of 1 September 1998 which contains the report of the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee, to submit this report to the plenary for its consideration and adoption. In doing so, I wish to express my appreciation to all members of the Ad Hoc Committee for the very constructive and substantive approach taken to the work of the Ad Hoc Committee in the sessions that we have held, and I would also like to thank the secretariat, in particular Mr. Zaleski, who is the Secretary of the Ad Hoc Committee, for all of their help over the last period of days.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the presentation of his report. At this stage, I understand that the report of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons, as contained in document CD/1554, is even now being distributed to the Conference. In the circumstances, Ambassador de Icaza, could I ask you to present the report formally, sir?

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor in a formal plenary of the Conference since you assumed the presidency, I wish to repeat the congratulations that I have already conveyed to you in informal plenaries and to offer you my delegation's cooperation in the discharge of your very important duties.

On 16 March last the Conference established the Ad Hoc Committee under item 4 of the agenda to negotiate for the purpose of reaching agreements on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. On 14 May the Conference on Disarmament did me the honour of appointing me Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, for which honour and trust I express my appreciation.

The Committee held nine meetings and exchanged interesting views on security assurances, especially concerning their purpose and the nature and scope of those that have been given so far. A summary of the views that were expressed is annexed to, and forms an integral part of the report that was adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee at its ninth meeting on the first of this month, that is, the day before yesterday.

On behalf of the Committee, I submit to the plenary of the Conference document CD/1554, which contains this self-explanatory report. I would like to express my thanks to the delegations that participated in the work and to the secretariat of the Conference, and very particularly to Mr. Vladimir Bogomolov, for the support extended to the Chairman of the Committee.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the presentation of his report and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. To paraphrase the Duke of Wellington on another occasion, the circulation of this report was "a damned close thing". Thank you very much, secretariat.

In accordance with past practice, it is my intention to put the two reports that were introduced by Ambassador de Icaza and Ambassador Moher, as contained in documents CD/1554 and CD/1555 respectively, for adoption by the Conference at the next plenary meeting on Tuesday, 8 September 1998.

Mr. LAMDAN (Israel): Since I shall be relinquishing my post in Geneva in October, I take the floor to take my leave of you, the delegates to the Conference on Disarmament. But at the outset though, I should like to join in the expressions of sympathy and, I fear, condolence to the Swiss Government and people on the terrible tragedy they have suffered today.

(Mr. Lamdan, Israel)

It has in fact been a genuine pleasure and a privilege to work with you all over the last four years. I would also salute several colleagues, in absentia, as it were, who made their mark on the CD over the period but who, given the nature of our profession, have moved on elsewhere.

I shall leave with some enduring memories - of serious, and sometimes less than serious debate; of swift and occasionally cutting repartee; of surrealistic exchanges in the midst of tense negotiations; of moments of grand theatre which left one wondering whether one was witness to a Greek tragedy or simple burlesque, of "Smiling Buddhas", of intimate definitions of "irresistible desires" and of theological exegesis on the subtle differences between "on" and "under" in the English language. But in the main, I shall leave with memories of men and women of character and integrity, attempting to grapple with the agonizing dilemmas of disarmament, which, if left unresolved, will gravely affect the future of mankind and, I dare say, of humanity as we know them today.

I leave also with some feelings of achievement, or at least of having been party to a positive process which, despite the prophets of gloom, is moving forward, however slowly. I had a hand in Israel's acceptance, together with others, as a full member of this Conference. I took a modest part in the negotiations on CTBT, to whose text Israel made significant contributions and which Israel was among the first to sign. Recently, it fell to me to deliver my Government's decision not to stand in the way of negotiations on an FMCT. Something has been achieved over the last four years, and the CD looks set to achieve more over the next few years.

Israel is not given to making programmatic speeches on a periodic basis about our national positions. It was indeed over a year after becoming a member of the CD that the Director-General of our Foreign Ministry attended this forum in September 1997 and set out those positions in some detail. Their fundamentals are likely to remain constant for the foreseeable future. They revolve essentially around two points. First, that for us disarmament is a regional issue, embracing all countries of the Middle East and to be negotiated directly by them. Second, that peacemaking precedes disarmament. Confidence-building measures on the way to peace, certainly - but disarmament before making peace, and before putting that peace to the test, is foolhardy and scarcely a viable policy for national defence.

We are also not in the habit of politicizing the debates at the CD. Whilst it is obvious that the CD deals with matters heavy with political import, this forum is not the General Assembly of the United Nations, nor the Security Council nor, for that matter, the Commission on Human Rights. It is a negotiating body, the sole multilateral forum for the negotiation of international instruments in the area of disarmament. We would be derelict in our duty if we allowed the CD to be sidetracked by political squabbling or if it were to lose its primary raison d'être.

At the same time, I must admit that it has taken almighty efforts of self-restraint on my part not to reply to the jibes and the hectoring of certain members of the CD from the Middle East region. Two of them, in

(Mr. Lamdan, Israel)

particular, never miss a trick, even though they choose to forget that it was their declared policies in the 1950s and the 1960s of destroying Israel, root and branch, which obliged us to assume our defensive posture. One of them even takes umbrage at references to our national security, which, to say the least, is bizarre, considering what the CD is about.

One last, serious word. If I may, I would like to invite members to contemplate the unhappy fact that Israel lives in a dangerous place. We do not have the comfort of residing in the antipodes. We do not have the reassurance of being part of a powerful military alliance or even living under its umbrella. In the Bible, we were promised a "land flowing with milk and honey". Perhaps God should have added a footnote to the effect that, in time, our region would be overflowing with arms and animosity. One CD member in the Middle East is clearly embarked on a programme of military nuclearization, despite its posturing and protestations to the contrary - and in witness thereof, it recently tested a new and powerful delivery system. Another has had its nuclear programme dismantled by the Security Council, but would doubtless be disposed to resume it, given half a chance. Several Middle Eastern countries have extensive programmes for weapons of mass destruction. Israel is bound to remain vigilant. We shall continue to adopt positions in this forum with the greatest of discretion and deliberateness, wholly in accordance with our national security interests.

At the same time, we are committed to the processes of disarmament and to the work of this Conference. We are also committed to a world freed from the threat of arms, both conventional and non-conventional, in which all can live at peace. We will continue to do our part. Hence, let me wish you all success in the future endeavours of the CD, in the hope that this is not merely a farewell but that, in the fullness of time, your efforts - our combined efforts - will culminate in a "farewell to arms", duly negotiated, in full transparency and by consensus.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Israel for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. In view of the fact that we will be having a drafting session later on this morning, I will refrain from offering advice on the drafting of the commitment received by Israel from the Almighty.

Mr. Ambassador, seriously, as the first representative of your country to the Conference on Disarmament since your country's admission as a full member of the Conference, you have had to present and defend the positions of your Government on the issues under discussion in the Conference. You have done so, sir, with authority, perseverance and diplomatic talent. I have certainly enjoyed working with you, sir, and I should like to express to you and your family our very best wishes for continued success and personal happiness.

Mr. AFZAL (Pakistan): Mr. President, may I join you and others in extending our condolences to the Government of Switzerland on this tragedy of which we heard this morning.

(Mr. Afzal, Pakistan)

My intervention is to inform the Conference that my delegation has requested the CD secretariat to circulate the following documents as official documents of the Conference. These are: the statement by Mr. Gohar Ayub Khan, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, made in the Conference on 19 March 1998; the statement by Ambassador Munir Akram made in the Conference on 14 May 1998; the statement by Ambassador Munir Akram made in the Conference on 2 June 1998; and the statement by Ambassador Munir Akram made in the Conference on 30 July 1998. I have also to request you that these documents be included in the list of other documents in the report to the General Assembly which we are negotiating at this moment.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan and I am grateful to him for having given me advance warning of his statement. The request is noted.

I would like at this stage to report to the Conference on the consultations which the presidency has undertaken, in accordance with paragraph 1 of decision CD/1501, to seek the views of members of the Conference on appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with agenda item 1. I am doing so today in order that the Conference can consider my findings before we meet to adopt the annual report on Tuesday next.

As the Conference is aware, on Wednesday, 19 August, I convened informal open-ended consultations to allow delegations to express their points of view following the adoption of decision CD/1547. I repeat, I was grateful to those delegations who took part for the constructive and forward-looking manner in which they set out their positions. The exchange of views which took place revealed a divergence of opinion between those delegations who believed that the Conference should now concentrate its energies on launching the negotiations for a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, which they regarded as the next, necessary step towards nuclear disarmament, and those who believed that the Conference needs also to establish an ad hoc committee or some other mechanism for addressing nuclear disarmament. Indeed, the distinguished representative of Chile, Ambassador Illanes, speaking on behalf of the Group of 21, recalled that nuclear disarmament remained the "highest priority" for his Group. Other speakers pointed to the fact that a number of proposals for addressing nuclear disarmament, including those presented during previous sessions, remained on the table, and should be taken up. It was also suggested that the presidency should investigate the possibility of attempting a synthesis of existing proposals to see whether a basis for consensus might be established.

In the short period which has elapsed since these informal consultations I have consulted individual delegations and the coordinators of the regional groups. These consultations have confirmed the importance which is attached to finding a satisfactory basis for dealing with agenda item 1. However, there remain differing views on precisely what that basis should be. In my judgement, and despite the assurances of flexibility and moderation which I have received from all quarters, delegations' positions are still too far apart to be bridged even through the most ingenious drafting.

(The President)

There is now no prospect of agreeing at this session on the establishment of any further mechanism to address nuclear disarmament. I therefore believe that the mandate given to successive presidencies by decision CD/1501, which relates to the Conference's 1998 programme of work, is technically spent. Nevertheless, given the importance of this issue, I assume that delegations would not wish this report to be the last word on the subject. Indeed, despite the inconclusive outcome, a number of delegations have told me that they have found the consultative process initiated by decision CD/1501 to be useful and that they would favour its continuation in some form or other. I would like, therefore, to recommend that the Troika consultations which arose from paragraph 1 of CD/1501 resume at the start of the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before adjourning, I should like to remind you that we will hold an informal plenary meeting immediately following this plenary meeting, in order to address the outstanding issues concerning our draft annual report to the United Nations General Assembly. This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 8 September 1998, at 10 a.m., at which time I intend to proceed to the adoption of our draft annual report to the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly and to conclude the 1998 session of the Conference.

Mr. SHISHECHIHA (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, since this is the first time I take the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference at this juncture.

I would also like to add my voice to the previous speakers and express my delegation's condolences to the Government and people of Switzerland on the Swissair crash.

Just for the record, one delegation referred to the source of instability and danger in the Middle East. The source of instability in this region is not hidden from anyone, either in the region of the Middle East or in other regions of the world. It goes without saying that the unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and other programmes for production of weapons of mass destruction are the main source of instability and rearmament in the region. Again just for the record, I officially announce here that the recent missile test in my country is solely for defence purposes and does not threaten any country in the world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Iran and for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, my delegation listened carefully to the report that you were kind enough to give us today with regard to the presidential consultations on agenda item 1. I think that it would be important for this report to be circulated so that we can have it and analyse it thoroughly, and that reference should be made to this plenary in the Conference's report in the same way as references are included to the reports that have been given by the Special Coordinators on other items.

The PRESIDENT: You have all heard the request of the Ambassador of Mexico. I am flattered that he wishes to accord status to my report that my predecessors did not apparently enjoy, but I have obviously no objection.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): My understanding is that normally on these reports you only have the reports of Ad Hoc Committees in the official report. If we were to include your statement in the report, I should like also to include the reports of the Special Coordinators as well.

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador de Icaza, I am just trying to establish in my own mind the precise extent of your request: it is that the statement I have just made should be circulated as a CD document?

Mr. de ICAZA (translated from Spanish): Yes, sir, I would like reference to be made to it in the report just as reference is made in the report to the reports of the Special Coordinators.

The PRESIDENT: You are asking for the statement which I have just made to be distributed as a CD document and for reference to be made to it in the report which we will be considering shortly? That's a 'yes'?

Mr. de ICAZA (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, in paragraph 16 of the draft report mention is made of a report presented by the Special Coordinator on expansion; in paragraph 19 we speak of a report presented by the Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda, and so on and so on. It's necessary that, with regard to this very important item on which the presidency was entrusted with holding special consultations and for which the presidency itself took responsibility, reference be made to the fact that the President gave his final report and that that final report appears in document such and such.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I see no objection to proceeding as you have suggested.

I see no other speakers. This plenary stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.